

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Original) A material for plugging a well comprising compacted nodules comprising bentonite in admixture with a proportion of water to permit the formation of compacted nodules having a density of at least about 2.0 g/cm<sup>3</sup> and a mean particle survival at a crush force of at least 800 newtons and being capable of having at least 50% survival when dropped 1.5 meters onto a concrete surface.
2. (Original) A material for plugging a well of claim 1 comprising from about 35% to about 98% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 45% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 2% to about 20% by weight nonconnate water, said material being in the form of compacted nodules.
3. (Original) A material for plugging a well of claim 1 comprising from about 45% to about 95% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 35% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 5% to about 20% by weight nonconnate water.
4. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 1 comprising from about 50% to about 90% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 30% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 10% to about 20% by weight nonconnate water.

5. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 2 comprising from about 64% to about 88% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 20% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 12% to about 16% by weight nonconnate water.
6. (Original) The material for plugging a drill hole of claim 1 consisting essentially of from about 85% to about 90% by weight sodium bentonite and from about 10% to about 15% by weight nonconnate water.
7. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 1 wherein said compacted nodules are substantially pillow shaped with a largest cross sectional dimension is from about 7/8 inch to about 4 inches.
8. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 1 wherein said largest cross sectional dimension of from about 1 inch to about 4 inches.
9. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 1 wherein said compacted nodules are in the form of spheres having a diameter of from about 1 inch to about 4 inches.
10. (Original) The material for plugging a well of claim 1 wherein said compacted nodules are in the form of flattened spheres having a major diameter of from about 1 inch to about 4 inches and a minor diameter wherein the minor diameter is from about 0.50 to 0.99 times the major diameter.
11. (Original) A method for forming a material for plugging a well comprising
  - a. obtaining a feedstock comprising bentonite in admixture with a proportion of water to permit the formation of compacted nodules having a density of at least 2.0 g/cm<sup>3</sup>

and a mean particle survival at a crush force of at least 800 newtons and capable of having at least 50% survival when dropped 1.5 meters onto a concrete surface,

- b. feeding the feedstock under pressure to a continuous roll press machine under conditions to permit the formation of said compacted nodules and
- c. recovering the compacted nodules.

- 12. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the feedstock comprises from about 35% to about 98% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 45% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 2% to about 20% by weight nonconnate water.
- 13. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the feedstock comprises from about 45% to about 95% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 35% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 5% to about 20% by weight nonconnate water.
- 14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the feedstock comprises from about 64% to about 88% by weight bentonite, from about 0% to about 20% by weight nonbentonite solids, and from about 12% to about 16% by weight nonconnate water.
- 15. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the feedstock consists essentially of from about 85% to about 90% by weight bentonite and from about 10% to about 15% by weight nonconnate water.
- 16. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the pressure is a pressure of at least about 1 Mpa.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the pressure is a pressure of at least about 3 Mpa.
18. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the pressure is a pressure of at least about 5 Mpa.
19. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said continuous manufacturing machine is a roller press.
20. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said roller press is operated at a speed of from about 2 RPM to about 50 RPM.
21. (Original) A material for plugging a well, said material being in the form of compacted nodules having a density of at least 2.0 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, and a mean particle survival at a crush force of at least 800 newtons and capable of having at least 50% survival when dropped 1.5 meters onto a concrete surface, said material being formed by the process comprising
- a. obtaining a feedstock comprising sodium bentonite in admixture with a proportion of water to permit the formation of compacted nodules having a density of at least 2.0 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, and a mean particle survival at a crush force of at least 800 newtons and capable of having at least 50% survival when dropped 1.5 meters onto a concrete surface.
  - b. feeding the feedstock under pressure to a continuous roll press machine under conditions to permit the formation of said compacted nodules and
  - c. recovering the compacted nodules.

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